



FIA Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Today's big story

Take your kids to work day at the FIA

Family Independence Agency offices around Michigan participated in "Take Your Child to Work Day" on April 22. At



Pictures of children participating in Benzie County (above) Back: Brent Saffron, Addie Kramer, Middle: Allison Saffron, Allison Crossman, Eli Kramer; Front: Haley Madsen. In Manistee County (below l-r) Gabe Delgado, Paige Picardat and Miranda Saucedo. Missing from the photo are Lauren Ward and Missie Letson.



in addition to learning about the parents' work, the kids volunteered to assist with much needed office activities such as collating of forms, preparing application packets and organizing supplies.

Benzie and Manistee County FIA offices, children from ages two to 14 were present for up to a full day in the offices. They worked in the file room, helped stamp applications, colored important papers, and learned social skills throughout the day. In Manistee one child shared strep throat with her new friends. Luckily, Mom was the only one who came down with the dreaded illness!

At **Berrien County FIA** (photo below) 24 children attended. The day began with a welcome and introduction where each manager explained the functions of her section. Activities included a scavenger hunt at different locations in the office. Once the child found the location (with the assistance of their parent), they were given a small gift. At each office the child was given a list of questions to ask that person that pertained to his or her job duties within the agency. In

FIA employee wins Putman Award

Charlene Anderson, a children's protective services specialist for Muskegon County Family Independence Agency, was awarded the Lisa Putman Award by National Association of Social Workers Michigan Chapter. She received the award at the organization's annual meeting and awards banquet March 19.



NASW MI photo

"Char has specialized in sexual abuse cases for eight years and goes above and beyond in assessment, handling high-risk situations and handling a large caseload," said *Connections*, the NASW Michigan newsletter.

"I am so honored and humbled by this experience," Anderson said. "I think all CPS workers deserve recognition." Anderson has been an FIA employee since 1995. Her award is named for the late Lisa Putman, a CPS specialist in Macomb County that was killed during a home call May 20, 1998.

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Bowling for kids

From **Abbey Brooks, Family Independence Specialist**
Griatiot County Family Independence Agency, Ithaca
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Four employees from Griatiot County FIA participated in a Big Brothers-Big Sisters "Bowling for Kids Sake" event April 17 at 300 Bowl bowling alley in Alma. There were other teams from various local businesses and many groups of family and friends. Our team name was Friends Inspiring Adolescents. We had a great time while raising money for a wonderful cause. Pictured from left are **Abbey Brooks, Kelly Ritter** (ES), **Jill Barnes** (FIS) and **Cheryl Liberty** (ES).



Sanilac FIA staffers exceed fundraising goals

From Karen Foster, Community Resource Coordinator
Lapeer and Sanilac County FIA, Sandusky
FosterK@michigan.gov

Sanilac County Family Independence Agency employees exceeded their goals six-fold in a recent fundraising effort.

Concerned about infants sleeping in unsafe conditions, the staff members set a goal to raise enough money for a crib for a low-income family. Instead, generous staff members raised \$858 to purchase six new cribs and mattresses.

The proceeds were presented to Kris Kreger, representing the Community Baby Pantry, on March 31. The Pantry, a local Child Abuse Prevention Council-sponsored activity, will purchase the cribs at a discount and select the

families to receive them.



From left: Managers James Beyer & Linda Courter present a check to Kris Kreger, Community Baby Pantry.

The Sanilac County staffers – numbering less than 40 – used a variety of fundraising methods throughout March. The efforts, coordinated by the Labor-Management Committee,

included dress down days, a popcorn and pop break time fundraiser, a spaghetti luncheon, a bake sale, and collection of pocket change in a big jar in the break room.

Some staff members also issued challenges to their colleagues such as, “I’ll donate enough for the mattress if funds are raised for another crib.” Anonymous staff donors also provided the pizza luncheon celebration.

This effort was coordinated simultaneously with a staff food drive that provided food with an estimated value of \$375 to a local pantry.

Also during March, most Sanilac FIA staff members were involved in a Bowl-A-Thon that raised more than \$4,000 for a scholarship fund. The fund, established in memory of Mr. Michael Stevens, a Sanilac County FIA child protection worker who passed away suddenly in 2003, will help students who graduated from high school while experiencing adversities.

Anyone interested in contributing to the scholarship fund may send donations anytime to the Sanilac County Community Foundation, Attention: Michael Stevens Scholarship Fund, PO Box 348, Sandusky, MI 48471.

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Q: In this budget crisis, how is the state able to pay overtime hours to FIS/ES to process applications from the expanded Food Assistance Program but are financially unable to give workers the four hours in BLT that we are losing each paycheck?



LaToya Gaines

Wayne County McNichols District, Detroit

A: When considering how to handle the expected increased workload of around 60,000 Food Assistance Program cases, we looked at several options. We discussed these options with the UAW at a statewide labor-management meeting.

One option was to hire additional, limited-term staff to handle these cases for the duration of the (Food Assistance) waiver. Another option was to provide overtime to the current employees. The union supported overtime as the preferred method to cover the work and also provide an opportunity for members to gain earnings to offset the Banked Leave Time.

The funding for overtime is from our Salary & Wage Account that covers all local office staff. Due to the hiring freeze we had funding from vacant positions to cover the cost of overtime. We will now be moving to fill our fundable vacancies to reduce the workload in local offices. However, this reduces our capability for further overtime.

The hours of overtime authorized for Expanded Food Assistance Program would only equate to about 3.4 hours per local office employee for an entire year. Unfortunately this amount would fall far short of replacing the Banked Leave Time.

Jim Nye, Director

FIA Field Operations Administration
Lansing

Send your question to FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Volunteers and recycling – a winner

Sofia Garcia, a dedicated Sanilac FIA volunteer with more than 15,000 hours of service, has participated enthusiastically



in the FIA recycling program. Staff members set aside confidential and non-confidential items to be shredded, and volunteers feed the shredder. Ms. Garcia is the primary volunteer helping with this effort. Staff members

volunteer to take bags of shredded material to the Sanilac Recycling Center. Thanks to the participating staff members and volunteers, many benefit.

—Karen Foster

Christmas in April for Sgt. ES

From Judith A. Williams, District Manager
Macomb County FIA Warren District Office
WilliamsJ19@michigan.gov

Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus and their trusty Elf made a surprise visit to the Macomb County FIA Warren District Office April 28 to visit Technical Sergeant George Hall, aka eligibility specialist George Hall.

Family independence manager Pamela Harville and George's co-workers – aka "The Marvels" – were tipped off that he would be returning home from Iraq for a little R&R and to be with his family. So The Marvels quickly organized a "Christmas in April" surprise party for him. With the help of the American Red Cross they distributed a suggested gift list of items most needed by the troops to the local office staff. They offered white socks, Pringles, sunglasses, Kool-Aid, envelopes, baby wipes, eye drops, writing paper and pens.

George was speechless when he saw the balloons, cake and gifts on display but he was not the only person to be honored on that day. George presented Pam Harville and "The Marvels" with a very special certificate and flag from the United States Air Force. "This is to certify that the accompanying American flag was flown on a combat mission into Baghdad, Iraq on 17 MAR 04 in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom," it read. The local office plans to frame the flag and certificate along with a picture of George and prominently display it in the local office. George returned to Iraq on May 19, 2004.

"I can't begin to say how much I was totally blown away with the outpouring of support," George said in a thank you note. "You never know what kind of impression you've left on someone until difficult situations occur; the impression that has been left on me by the Warren District is that of support, compassion, patriotism and even valor."

Please keep TSGT, USAF George Hall, Loadmaster, 171st Airlift Squadron, Air National Guard in your daily prayers.

Right: Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus and their trusty Elf with eligibility specialist George Hall.



Below: George and friends at the Macomb County Warren office.



Foster parent training and award banquet

By Terri L. Bush, Social Service Program Manager
Cheboygan-Mackinac FIA, St. Ignace
BushT@michigan.gov

More than 57 foster parents and agency staff attended the Eastern Upper Peninsula Foster Parent Training Coalition annual foster parent training and award banquet held at the Little Bear Community Center in St. Ignace April 27.

The foster parent award banquet was held during the noon meal. Guest speaker James Bias, the Sault Tribe prosecutor, applauded foster parents for their dedication and honored them as heroes for the loving care they provide. Foster parents received certificates of appreciation and pins for years of service. Deanna and Floyd Rader were recognized for 30 years and Alice Bruce for 27 years of foster parenting. Area businesses donated special prizes awarded to foster parents.

During the event, six hours of training was provided on topics including first aid, fire safety, verbal de-escalation, surviving foster parenting, common sense parenting and the foster care review board. Presenters taught new skills and offered practical suggestions to assist with the challenges of foster parenting. At the conclusion of training, foster parents had the opportunity to tour the new Sault Tribe Youth Facility.

The coalition has been in existence 15 years. It helps in recruiting, retaining and training licensed foster parents. Participating agencies include Alger-Schoolcraft, Cheboygan-Mackinac and Chippewa-Luce Family Independence Agencies, Bay Mills Indian Community, Sault Tribe-Binogii Placement Agency and the Michigan Indian Child Welfare Agency.



Deanna and Floyd Rader

Date: May 6
To: FIA Matters!
Subj: Annette Smith

I feel compelled to share a story regarding one of our adult services workers, Annette Smith. One of her first tasks was to personally serve a 91-year-old client with a notice to appear for a guardianship hearing.

After repeated home call attempts, Annette contacted the Traverse City Police from her cell phone in the client's driveway. All the doors to the house were locked and shades pulled down in the windows. The police broke down the door to find the client lying on her kitchen floor.

Emergency medical personnel indicated she had been lying there for a couple of days and would certainly have died from dehydration within a day or two. Annette's heroic actions certainly saved this client's life.

Gary Aschim, Services Supervisor
Grand Traverse & Leelanau Family Independence Agency
Traverse City

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

Date: April 15
To: Judith Williams, District Manager
Macomb County FIA Warren District Office
Subj: Your staff

I must acknowledge the positive efforts of the dedicated employees in the Warren FIA. An April 13 team decision making meeting was scheduled by CPS (children's protective services) specialist [Amie Neil](#) and her supervisor, [Larry Christ](#). Ms. Neil was very concerned for five young children who were homeless, had missed the majority of the school year, (and) whose (family) income was insufficient to meet their needs. One of the children had a possible medical need whose parent was uncooperative and was unwilling to accept responsibility for the consequences of poor choices leading to CPS involvement. The mother wanted her children (all under age 11) to participate. [Karen Hattan](#) agreed to help supervise the children while the meeting was in progress.

The children had been told what was happening and were anxious about being separated from their mother. Throughout the meeting the mother was disruptive. Whenever a concern was presented she would interrupt to provide rebuttal. The concerns for the safety and well being of the children were made clear. Housing, inadequate finances, stability, school attendance, medical needs, cooperation, honesty, and concern for the emotional well being of the children were presented. The meeting was interrupted (twice) because of the behaviors of the children.

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CPS wanted (assurance) that the children had a safe place to live and to offer services in addressing the other concerns. The mother was agreeable to working with Families First with the understanding that CPS would be responsible in verifying the family had a viable plan for housing. While it would have appeared 'easier' to let the court sort through the safety concerns, CPS staff did not take the easiest approach. They were willing to give the parent an opportunity to address the needs of her children with our agency's support and referral to services. It was clear that the extended family may have preferred a more direct form of intervention. However, less intrusive options were appropriate and available, in spite of the mother's willingness to exclude extended family's support.

My purpose in contacting you is to honor your staff's professionalism in doing what is in the best interest of children. It is not easy, and often not understood by, the families and community we serve. However, they have clearly earned my respect and deserve to be acknowledged for the great team they have become.

David Buscher, Family to Family Initiative
Macomb County Family Independence Agency
Clinton Township

■ *Karen Hattan is a word processing assistant functioning as a CPS-Adult Unit clerk in Warren.*